

August 13th, 1964, Evening Session.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE PERSON OF CHRIST IN THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

A BRIEF SURVEY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
THE UNION OF THE TWO NATURES

By BISHOP KAREKIN SARKISSIAN

Speaking about the historical experience of the Armenian people, Henri Gregoire, the highly renowned Belgian Byzantinist, says: "*la querelle des deux natures en Jesus-Christ fut sa tragedie.*"¹ For more than one reason, this statement can be extended to the whole Christian East. Bitter controversies, mutual accusations of heresy followed by anathemas, harmful enmities and disastrous persecutions have affected our past history to a point where we have lost the clear understanding of our respective attitudes towards Christology, and all our relationships in history have been marked with a strong trend of polemics which, at its best, resulted in the recognition of certain formulae as absolute and, therefore, unchangeable at any cost.

If our present ecumenical era, with its new spirit of openness towards each other, will not open our eyes to new visions and a new and deeper understanding of our respective positions, then, indeed, we must confess that we have lost a God-given opportunity for a new witness to the unity and mission of the Church to which we have the firm consciousness of belonging together.

It is in this spirit of a fresh approach to our respective attitudes that I would like to set forth as clearly as possible the fundamental positions of the Armenian Church in the past by offering to your consideration and evaluation some statements of genuine authority within the Armenian Church with regard to the understanding of the unity of the Two Natures in Christ.

First of all, let us begin with a confessional statement which enjoys the highest authority in the Armenian Church as it is always publicly professed by candidates for the Holy Orders at the Ordination and Consecration Services.

¹ Sirapie Der Nersessian, *Armenia and the Byzantine Empire* (Cambridge, Mass., 1947), Preface, p. xix.

"We believe that One of the Three Persons, God the Word, begotten of the Father before the ages, in time descended in the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos, took of her blood (i.e. substance) and united it with His Godhead; for nine months He waited in the womb of the Immaculate Virgin and (thus) the perfect God became perfect man with soul, spirit and flesh. One person, one prosopon and one united nature: God became man without undergoing change and alteration, He was conceived without human seed and was born immaculate. As there is no beginning for His Godhead, so there is no end for his manhood. (For Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, and the same for ever.)

"We believe that our Lord Jesus Christ walked about on the earth. At the age of thirty years He came to be baptized. The Father bore witness from above by saying: 'This is my beloved son,' and the Holy Spirit in the likeness of a dove descended upon Him. He was tempted by Satan but overcame him. He preached salvation to men. He laboured bodily and underwent fatigue, hunger and thirst. Then He voluntarily suffered, was crucified and died bodily and remained alive through His Godhead. The body was placed in the tomb being united with the Godhead; by the soul He descended into hell with the unseparable Godhead."²

Our purpose will be to try to show how this understanding of the doctrine of the person of Christ was reached. But, at this juncture, a historical fact must be taken into account before any doctrinal inquiry and analysis.

Now, it must be accepted that the Armenian Church did not react to the Council of Chalcedon only upon the instigation and under the influence of the Syrians in the beginning of the sixth century. Nor were they misled because of the deficiency of their language in its capacity to render correctly the subtleties of the Greek expressions. Neither did they exploit the doctrinal issues for purely political and nationalistic purposes. In fact, they dealt with the Council of Chalcedon on doctrinal ground, and as early as the fifth century, as will be shown now.

We are in possession of two doctrinal documents of the fifth

² See the *Book of Daily Offices*, where this Confession appears always on the first page.

century which make it clear how the Armenian Church understood the union of the Two Natures.

1) The first document is a treatise ascribed to Moses of Khoren or Khorenatsi, the famous Armenian historiographer.³ Speaking against those who separate Christ in two, he asserts very strongly the idea of unity right from the beginning by saying that it is possible for *many* elements to join together and to be united in *one* nature. Man is composed of earthly and spiritual elements, but he has one nature. The two are not confused in him; that is to say, the flesh is not soul and the soul is not flesh. Each maintains its own properties. The distinctness of the two is not destroyed by their union. Likewise, the Incarnation also must be understood in the same manner. We must confess Christ One in His nature because it is said "the Word became flesh" and that "He took the form of a servant." The meaning of the Scriptures is clear: that which was taken by the Word was that which He did not have. Therefore, the two, the Word and the flesh, which were separate before the Incarnation, became one after the Incarnation.

Arguing against those who consider the union of the *Two Natures* impossible, he says that they have no right to assert the unity of the *persons*.⁴

"It is said (in the Scriptures) 'He who was in the form of God took the form of a Servant.' You see, it says form *and* form; which form is then absorbed in the mixture according to their confession? For (if they think that) the union of the whole results in confusion, then they have to understand the same for *the persons*. Indeed, their sayings are ridiculous . . . because, as in the legendary tales, they create one head and two tails!"⁵

He urges his opponents to give up their separatist attitude and confess the union of the Two Natures or to deny altogether the whole Incarnation.

³ The authenticity of this attribution is well assessed nowadays on scholarly ground.

⁴ The Armenian word is "demk" which generally corresponds to *pro-sopon*. Here, however, it stands for *hypostasis*, because obviously in this passage Khorenatsi tries to show that for those who say *Two Natures in One Person* this latter expression becomes an empty notion if its authors cannot conceive a unity in nature.

⁵ See *Book of Letters* (Tiflis, 1901), pp. 24-25.

It is not difficult to detect the influence of the Alexandrian theological tradition all through the text of the whole treatise.

2) The second document, which is a longer exposition than Khorenatsi's treatise and which deals with the subject on biblical and theological ground, rather than philosophical as was the case in the previous document, comes to us from St. John Mandakouni, a fifth century Church Father whose treatise is written in a remarkably pastoral and eirenical spirit.

This is an attempt "*to demonstrate*," as the title itself suggests so pointedly, why it is right to confess the Saviour "*of two natures*" (ek duo physeon) or "*one nature*" (mia physis). There is no place here for the least doubt that the doctrine of the Council of Chalcedon is directly aimed at in this treatise.

Here, again, we find a strong plea for maintaining firm the unity of the Two Natures in Christ the "how" of which remains above our human understanding.

There are two points which he refutes categorically: The first is the very idea of union as understood by those who in fact separate Christ in two. For him the union is a genuinely real one and not a sheer principle of union or simply an indwelling of the Word in the flesh. "Some consider that the descending (the Incarnation) was in appearance and not in truth." They believe that Christ became man in the sense that He inhabited the flesh by "complaisance and will."⁶

Here, in fact, he attacks the ideas propounded in the name of Theodore of Mopsuestia who was much more influential in the bordering countries of Armenia, the Syriac-speaking Christian world, than Nestorius or any other Antiochene theologian.

For him Christ assumed the human nature in its integral reality and united it to Himself inseparably and thus made it *His own*.

Secondly, he criticizes the Dyophysite position for its dualistic interpretation of Christ's life on the earth. The distinctness of the Two Natures has led the dyophysite thinkers so far as to give each *nature* the meaning of a *person*. It is this *hypostasized* understanding of Christ's natures, as the Tome of Leo formulates it so sharply, that has always been fiercely opposed by the non-Chalcedonians.

Mandakouni's interpretation of the Dyophysite position goes

⁶ *Book of Letters*, p. 33.

as far as to see in it the teaching not of two *persons*, but of two *individuals* in Christ. Thus, he compares the two Natures to Peter and John walking along in the same direction, but on parallel roads. Commenting on John 10:30, 14:9-10, he says:

"You see, He reveals Himself as an image, a ray shone out for us from the light. He never speaks of the two persons as going side by side or as walking on parallel roads each being distinct from one another, such as Peter and John travelling side by side to the same end."⁷

Obviously, this is an exaggeration of the Chalcedonian understanding of Christ's natures. However, it is also an eloquent testimony to the kind of interpretation in which the dualistic conception—the stress put on the Two Natures—has been the stumbling block for the non-Chalcedonians.

But the core of Mandakouni's thinking is to be found in the following passage:

"God the Word took flesh and became man; thus, He united to Himself, in God-fitting manner, the body of our lowliness, the whole soul and flesh; and the flesh truly became the flesh of the Word God. In virtue of this it is said of the Invisible that He is seen, of the Intangible that He is felt, crucified, buried and risen on the third day. For He Himself was both the passible and impassible, the mortal who received death. Otherwise, how could the Lord of Glory have been crucified? This is like the body which is formed of many members, although these latter have not the same function. For the soul in itself does not suffer any wounding, neither the flesh affliction, and the Word is incapable of both. But in everything He is the one who suffers and the one who is impassible, and because of that he is said to be man and God by having the definition of '*God Incarnate*.'"⁸

The union has such an intimate character that through the act of the Incarnation "The Word is the Word of the flesh and the flesh is the flesh of the word."⁹

⁷ *Book of Letters*, pp. 36-37.

⁸ *Book of Letters*, pp. 36-37.

⁹ One can easily recognize in this expression a striking similarity with St. Cyril's 11th Anathema which runs as follows: "If anyone does not confess the flesh of our Lord to be life-giving and *the own flesh of the Word Himself* conjoined to Him in dignity, or having a more divine indwelling,

These two fifth-century documents are sufficient to give us a clue to the way of christological thinking in which the Armenian Church was engaged in the last quarter of the fifth century.¹⁰ In these two documents we are given an idea about the doctrinal basis upon which the Armenian Church took its official stand vis-à-vis the Council of Chalcedon in the beginning of the sixth century (506/8).

To confess Christ "*One Nature*" or "*Two Natures*" was the fundamental principle which guided the later theologians in their expositions of the doctrine of Christ's person as well as in their defense, through polemical writings, of this Christology which they cherished wholeheartedly all along their history.

During the subsequent centuries, the position of the Armenian Church remained unchanged. The heads of the Church as well as the Church divines (i.e. the vardapets) suspected Chalcedon on the grounds of its dualistic conception of Christ's person always being associated with the teaching of Nestorius.

It would take me too far if I tried to present the later stages of the Armenian position in detail. Therefore, I would confine my presentation to some cases where the Armenian Church leaders and theologians were engaged in correspondence with the Greek Church Fathers and, thus, the Armenian theologians were prompted to present the teaching of their church in the context of an *encounter* as is the case of our present consultations.¹¹

and not rather life-giving, as we affirm, because it became the own flesh of the Word who had strength to quicken all things, be he anathema." T. H. Bindly, *The Oecumenical Documents of Faith*, p. 215, fourth edition (London, 1950). See the Greek text, *ibid.*, pp. 114-115; the Armenian version in *Book of Letters*, p. 405.

¹⁰ It must be noted also that the translation into Armenian of Timothy Aeluros' *Refutation of the Council of Chalcedon and the Tome of Leo* (480-484) gave a strong move to the Armenian theologians in their fight against the Council of Chalcedon.

¹¹ We have a most valuable symposium of doctrinal letters exchanged between the Armenian Church Fathers and the Leaders of other churches, such as the Greek, Syrian and Gregorian Fathers. It is called *The Book of Letters*, to which we have frequently referred in the previous pages of this paper. The basic document for our inquiry will be this Collection of Letters. There are several other writings of Armenian theologians dealing specifically with the Council of Chalcedon and its christological teaching. But I felt that a thorough study of them would mean to make this exposition a very long treatise, which is not in its right place in the immediate purpose of this consultation.

1) In answering a letter sent by Photius, the Patriarch of Constantinople, to the Armenian Catholicos, Zacharia (855-877), Vardapet Sahag, surnamed "Meroud," deals at a considerable length with the problem of the union of the Two Natures.¹²

To Photius' invitation to the Armenians to accept the council of Chalcedon as the Fourth Ecumenical Council, he answers:

"Our Fathers rejected the Council of Chalcedon and preached Christ the Son to the world as 'One of Two Natures' united without confusion and without separation. They (i.e. the Chalcedonians) divided Him in two natures and operations and wills, thus following the Nestorian false teachings. But they describe Him also as united in order to win the simple-minded by showing them that they were far away from the Nestorian heresy." (p. 284)

What is that unity which the Chalcedonians have in mind? The unity of the *person*. But Vardapet Sahag, together with all the Armenian theologians, finds absurd this unity of *person* without the unity of the *nature*. That idea of unity, in his reckoning, is a clever and disguised escape from the Nestorian teaching which the Chalcedonians condemn by name. It is with this view that he collates passages from Nestorius and Pope Leo in order to show the affinity of their respective christological doctrines.

"What communion there exists between Chalcedon and Cyril?" asks Sahag. "For the latter said 'One united Nature of Two,' according to the Holy Council of Ephesus (431). Chalcedon decreed two separate natures." (pp. 285-286)

He goes on to explain the unity:

"Let us take as an example the man; it is to him that is attributed what belongs to the body and what is possible for the soul. But man is never said '*Two Natures*,' but '*One*.' But if one still goes on opposing (the union of the natures in Christ) and saying '*Two Natures*' for Christ, in fact one is asserting *three* natures: two human and one divine. Now, which of the three do they eliminate when they say 'Two Natures'? If they have in mind the body, then they are Eutychians; if the human soul, then they are Apollinarians; and if the divine, then they are like the Jews who said: 'You, being a man, make yourself God' (John 10:33)." (p. 287)

¹² See *Book of Letters*, pp. 283-294.

He aims specifically at the Chalcedonian definition when he says:

"The Council of Chalcedon said 'One Person and Two Natures in Christ' in order not to ascribe to God the Word the sufferings. This is ridiculous. For it was on the same point that the impious Nestorius erred when he opposed the Great Cyril." (p. 290)

And in order to show how the union was intimate he brings forth the example of the gold put in fire.

Again he argues against those who affirm that the natures are separated and the persons are united:

"For, if the union of the natures results in confusion, as they say, the same then must happen to the persons which they say to be one. For, the Apostle writes 'two persons': 'Though He was in the form of God . . . He took the form of a servant' (Philip. 2:6).¹⁸ Now, which of the two persons they are inclined to eliminate as they say one; for, if the one that is eliminated is God's person then they fall in the heresy of Sabelius; and if it is the man's person, how then could they see the Lord in the true form of man? Therefore, either the person is one in virtue of the union without confusion, as it truly is — and consequently, one has to accept the union of the two natures without confusion — or by dividing the natures divided will be said also the persons which no one of those who understand rightly the meaning of persons would accept and would dare say two perfect persons in one form. In fact, these people by saying two natures, two operations, two wills and two persons, understand two perfect and distinct persons according to the false teaching of Nestorius." (p. 291)

2) Again, in another correspondence which took place in the 10th century between Theodore, the Greek Metropolitan of Melitene, and Khatchig, the Armenian Catholicos, we find the same type of arguments put forward against the Council of Chalcedon and, particularly, against the formula of Two Natures. This time

¹⁸ The Armenian word is "kelb" (= a certain mode of being). The Greek word is *morphe*, implying essential character. It suggests unchangeableness, as contrasted to *schema* (= figure, fashion). In this passage the reference is to the pre-Incarnate Christ with divine attributes.

another theologian, by the name of Samuel, drafted the answer letter in the name of the Catholicos. He says:

"We do not agree with the new teaching of the Council of Chalcedon and of the Tome of Leo which state two natures in God the Word Incarnate. We confess Christ not God alone, neither man alone, and not God and man separated one from the other, but 'God made man.' And as He is Only-Begotten Son of the Father, so also He is the Only-born of of the mother, One Son; and as One Son, one Christ; and as One Christ, One person; and as One Person, one prosopon; and as one prosopon, one will; and as one will, also one operation; and as one operation, one nature; as He truly is: *One Nature*.

"Therefore, if they divide the natures, divided will be also the others; for, nothing else is the human nature than will, operation, person, prosopon, that is to say, the perfect man. If different is the nature of the flesh and unmixable with the Word, then different is also the will of the nature and different is the operation of the will. Again they fall in the heresy of Nestorius. . . . If the early Church Fathers in their fight against the heresies sometimes referred to the traces of the natures (in Christ's life) it was only for assessing the economy, that is to say, that the Word of God truly became man and endured all things (i.e. human experiences) through His body. But in no time did they draw a rule of faith asserting the 'Two Natures.' But the Fathers assembled at Chalcedon consenting with Leo openly decreed a rule of faith asserting two separate natures. Thus, they sinned, because earlier they had said in the second Council of Ephesus: 'If anyone says for the One Christ Two Natures,' let him be anathema.'"¹⁴

In order to explain the character of the union, the author brings forth the following analogy: The union, he says, must not be conceived as "One and one which have come together with the same dignity, but like a harp with the harper to whom is united in concord the movement of its will; or like the light of a lamp which is united with the rays of the sun and which cannot be separated from them and cannot shine forth with the distinct rays of its own. Likewise, the human essence united with the divine insepa-

¹⁴ *Book of Letters*, pp. 310, 314.

rably, does not operate separately according to its own power. For, the stronger overcomes the weaker by uniting it to itself and divinizing it."¹⁵

I could go on along this line by bringing forth many other passages taken from the Armenian Church Fathers and doctrinal statements. But I think it is sufficient for our immediate purpose to stop here and to consider the implications of the views expressed in the passages already quoted and briefly commented on.

What can we draw of these citations as significant aspects and conclusions with a view of mutual understanding?

1) First of all, we, both sides, need a *common language*. For, in all these passages one could easily perceive that for the Armenian theologians the word *nature* meant a concrete reality; and, as Samuel Vardapet said, it actually meant "the perfect man." Therefore, to use the expression "Two Natures" in this concrete sense of the term, gives easily way to the conception of division in Christ. This fear of theirs has been justified because of the Tome of Leo where the natures are described as self-consistent entities with their proper operations. This way of thinking in Christology, indeed, was not far from what Nestorius had taught. Thus, the "Nestorianizing" tendency of the Council of Chalcedon was bitterly resented and fiercely opposed by those churches who eagerly maintained firm the teaching of the Council of Ephesus (431). And it must be admitted that before they showed the affinity between Chalcedonism and Nestorianism it was the Nestorians themselves who welcomed the Council of Chalcedon seeing in it the vindication of their position. There is ample evidence to this effect in the 5th and 6th century Armenian Church history, particularly in its relationship with the Syriac-speaking Christianity of Mesopotamia and Persia.

If the term *nature* were taken in an abstract sense, that is to say, as denoting the properties pertaining to Godhead and manhood in Christ, then it would have been more easily understood. In that case, however, one could legitimately but not necessarily speak of more than *two* natures as was hinted at in a passage quoted above. Nevertheless, it would have been a happier expression and more acceptable one than the "Two Natures" in the Leonine sense of the term.

2) The second point is that the basic reality of utmost sig-

¹⁵ *Book of Letters*, p. 315 .

nificance in the whole understanding of Christ's person is that it was God who became man. The whole meaning of the Incarnation is that God assumed the human nature in its entirety. The central, initiative action was God's. It was He who descended from above and united to Himself what belonged to man in order to save humanity from the death of sin. "*And the Word became flesh.*" This is the fundamental, essential and unique fact which has served the non-Chalcedonians of all times as the basis of their Christology and a watchword for their position. From the times of St. Athanasius and St. Cyril up to our present time the strong emphasis has always been put on this biblical affirmation.

Doctrinally, this affirmation has developed in the conception of the closest, most intimate, inseparable yet unconfused union of the divine and human natures in Christ, and to such a point that the flesh has become God's flesh through which He suffered, was crucified and dead and buried. The subject, so to speak, was always God the Word. The human nature did not stand in itself alone in Christ, but was assumed by God and made His own. It is in this respect that one can say that God suffered. "We confess, therefore," says Saint Nerses IV, the greatest Armenian Church Father and theologian with a strong sense of ecumenical spirit, "Christ as God and Man, but we do not mean division by this, God forbid!, because He Himself suffered and did not suffer; since by His divine nature He was immutable and impassible, but in His human body He suffered and died. Consequently, those who say that it was one who suffered and another who did not suffer, fall into error. Thus it was none other than the Word who suffered and embraced death in His body; because the same Word Himself who was impassible and incorporeal consented to become passible in order to save humanity by His Passion."¹⁶

Going on further, St. Nerses speaks about the relationship between the two natures in the following passage:

"We comply with those who confess two natures not divided according to Nestorius, and not confused according to the heterodox teachings of Eutyches and Apollinaris, but united unconfusedly and indivisibly. For example, man has body and soul; the two are of different natures, because one

¹⁶ *The Profession of Faith of the Armenian Church by St. Nerses Shnorhali*, pp. 37-38. Translated with introduction and comment by Terenig Vartabed Poladian (Boston, Mass., 1941).

is heavenly, the other earthly; one is visible, the other invisible; one is temporal, the other immortal; but after the union man is said to have one nature and not two. No confusion is thought of in saying that man has one nature. We do not think of man as only of soul or of flesh, but as the union of the two. Thus the nature of Christ is said to be one, not confused, but two natures ineffably united with each other. If it were not so, then we should have to consider not only two natures in Christ but three, two human natures, that is, soul and body, and one divine nature. But according to the writings of the Fathers, after the union the duality in the sense of separatedness disappeared."¹⁷

3) If we are able to look further and deeper than what pure history gives us, in other words, if we can transcend certain historical formulations which have caused misunderstandings, without ignoring them or minimizing their significance, and grasp in a new effort of faithful obedience to Christ our faith in the Incarnation as such, I believe we have a firm common ground to stand on and make manifest our communion in faith. After all, faith is deeper and far more important than the formula which is a certain pattern of communication.¹⁸

The subsequent history of Chalcedon with all its efforts aiming at a conciliation between the Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian Churches has taught us that a rapprochement and a common understanding are possible if the problem is dealt with in itself, being distinguished from other problems of cultural, political or national character.

I should like to conclude this presentation with the challenging words of Catholicos Nerses IV:

"Therefore, if '*One Nature*' is said for the indissoluble and indivisible union and not for the confusion, and '*Two Natures*' is said as being unconfused, immutable and indivisible, *both are within the bounds of orthodoxy*."¹⁹

If this statement could be made in the twelfth century, what conclusions can we draw from it in the twentieth century?

This is the real challenge we face in common.

¹⁷ Terenig, Vartabed Poladian, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-41.

¹⁸ On this specific point see the last part of my article in the *Ecumenical Review*, "The Ecumenical Problem in Eastern Christendom," vol. XII, no. 4, July 1960, pp. 452-454.

¹⁹ See *Profession of Faith*, p. 41.

DISCUSSION: Concerning the Paper of Bishop Sarkissian

FATHER ROMANIDES: When you speak of one will and one energy, are you saying the same thing as Theodore and Nestorius?

BISHOP SARKISSIAN: When we speak of one, we always speak of a *united* one, not a simple numerical one.

ARCHBISHOP TIRAN: I would like to ask a question of the patristic theologians among us. Why was it that the Fathers of the 5th century did not, during their extensive disputations, make a serious attempt first to clarify and define their terms, so that there could be no confusion in their own minds and in the minds of their followers or opponents? Is it not strange that it is still not quite clear what the Fathers exactly meant by the few words which occupied their minds throughout the controversy, namely *physis*, *hypostasis*, *ousia*, etc.?

FATHER ROMANIDES: The clarification given by one side was not acceptable to the other. Each side believed that its terminology alone could protect the Church from heresy.

ARCHBISHOP TIRAN: Father Romanides' remark suggests that the debate was not really of substance but of semantics. I myself would not go as far as that, but would venture to say that the terms were not quite adequate to express in a satisfactory manner what the Fathers were struggling to express.

And there is another question which bothers me. It is this: Have the Fathers considered that if the humanity of Christ, the human nature of the Logos incarnate, is known by his human acts, his fleshly acts, such as eating, drinking, sleeping, etc., then on what basis can we say that he is still man, or human, or has human nature, after the Ascension? What light does the nature controversy throw on our belief that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and for eternity?

PROFESSOR FLOROVSKY: The Resurrection of the Body is a matter of faith, and is the basis of Christ's continuing humanity. The continuation of humanity with a body in the age to come is a mystery.

PROFESSOR MEYENDORFF: *Sarx* means created humanity and not necessarily physical flesh.

FATHER BOROVY: I am looking for the elements useful to our reconciliation. The first and the last pages of Bishop Sarkissian's paper are especially useful. The historical discussion is useful as information.

FATHER ROMANIDES: I got the impression that when the Armenian theologians argued against Chalcedon, they were arguing against Theodore of Mopsuestia — not against Chalcedon.

BISHOP SARKISSIAN: That is true to a large extent. As I already said, the Council of Chalcedon came to the consideration of the Armenians in the context of their fight against Nestorianism. The association between the Nestorian way of thinking and the early Chalcedonian understanding of Christology was a very close one. Those who followed Theodore of Mopsuestia in East Syria, Mesopotamia and Persia, were very happy with the Council of Chalcedon.

But this does not mean that the Armenian Church Fathers confounded Chalcedon and the dualistic Christology of Theodore. The second Council of Constantinople (553), with the condemnation of the *Three Chapters*, is most significant to this effect.

BISHOP EMILIANOS: There were attempts in the time of Photius to be reconciled with the Armenian Church, but the replies to Photius' letters seem to raise cultural rather than theological objections.

PROFESSOR MEYENDORFF: With due respect to Photius, his letters were too imperious and non-theological, and could hardly anticipate a theological reply.

PROFESSOR KONIDARIS: There is a fundamental inner coherence and continuity — therefore also unity — between all seven Ecumenical Councils. In consequence one cannot acknowledge only the first three. This has no particular bearing on the rapprochement and reunion between the Ancient Churches of the East and the Catholic Orthodox Church. We should remind ourselves that the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed did not prevent the necessity of its revision by the later Councils (3rd-6th), which simply interpreted the teachings of the first two on the basis of the faith of the Church in full conformity with the revealed truth.

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THE GREEK ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL REVIEW



The Greek Orthodox Theological Review is a publication for the exchange of scholarly articles and reviews in the fields of Biblical, Patristic and Contemporary Orthodox Theology, Church History, Byzantine History, and related Classical Studies.

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BOOK NOTES

REV. DEAN TIMOTHY ANDREWS, *The Eastern Orthodox Church — A Bibliography*. New York: Greek Archdiocese Publications Department, 1957. Pp. 79. 50 cents.

Since the first edition of *The Eastern Orthodox Church — A Bibliography* is out-of-print, the second edition has been printed to meet the need and the demand. The compiler has made a number of valuable additions and revisions in this new edition which contains 700 titles in comparison to the 315 titles listed in the first. This bibliography is also enhanced by the listing of Orthodox periodicals published in English, by the enumeration of Orthodox Sunday School material available and by a partial listing of Orthodox Publishers and Booksellers in America. This and other helpful information is to be had for anyone who is interested in enriching one's private library or one's understanding and appreciation of the Greek Orthodox Faith.

THE REV. CHRISTODOULOS KALLOS

STAN W. CARLSON and THE VERY REV. LEONID SOROKA, *Faith of Our Fathers: The Eastern Orthodox Religion*. Minneapolis: The Olympic Press, 1958. Revised and enlarged edition. Pp. 176. Illustrated. \$2.50.

The re-issuance of *Faith of Our Fathers* in a revised and enlarged second edition is a welcome addition to the rapidly increasing list of Orthodox literature now available in English. This book will undoubtedly continue to be popular because it fills the need for a clearly written, lucidly organized, and well but simply presented survey of the Eastern Orthodox religion for the general layman. In the ten sections of this thoroughly readable manual, the reader will find a veritable mine of information that will help him understand the history, teachings, and practices of the Orthodox Church better.

The ten sections of the book include "History of the Orthodox Church," "The House of Worship," "The Divine Liturgy," "The Great

Lent and Easter," "The Twelve Great Feast Days," "A Short Catechism," "Prayers and Orthodoxy," "Bible References," "The Orthodox Calendar," and "An Orthodox Dictionary." These titles merely suggest the range of material covered.

The new material added to this revised volume includes useful synopses of the books of the Old and New Testaments as well as the Apocrypha, explanations of the color symbolism of clerical vestments, a list of the proper ways of addressing the Orthodox clergy, an expanded list of baptismal names with the appropriate date of the name day, a chronology of important dates in Orthodox history, and the addition of minor feasts, with some revision of sundry other material also included. Information about the history, practices, and problems of the Orthodox Churches in America, as well as in their respective countries of origin, is also included.

Though this book is Slavic-Orthodox oriented, it can be effectively used by all national Orthodox jurisdictions with a few minor provisions. There are still a few places in which corrections should be made. On page 65, the Roman Catholic term "Extreme Unction" should be revised to read simply "Unction" or "Holy Unction." Fortunately, this misleading term is used only in this section of the book. The sections on music and art could well be re-written and expanded with a more accurate interpretation of the Byzantine Orthodox tradition. Something about Orthodox monasticism should probably have been included also.

JOHN E. REXINE

PETER T. KOURIDES, *The Evolution of the Greek Orthodox Church in America and Its Present Problems*. New York, 1959. Pp. 62.

This beautifully printed book is the permanent embodiment of a lecture given to the Hellenic Society of Constantinople in New York City on May 22, 1959, by Peter Kourides, General Counsel to the Greek Archdiocese of North and South America. The subject chosen for the lecture was a timely one and an important one for the future of the Greek Orthodox Church in America by a person whose knowledge of the workings and history of the Greek Church in this country is intimate, if not profound. The reader should not expect profound insight or penetrating analysis from this book; he will not get them here.

survey of the Petrine problem in all its aspects: (1) Peter the Apostle; (2) Peter the Martyr; (3) The Primacy of Peter. The book, which was originally produced as three lectures at the General Theological Seminary in New York, in the William Copley Winslow Memorial Foundation, in November 1955, clearly presents an historical picture of the evidence regarding the figure of Saint Peter. The author does not for a minute deny the historicity of Peter or his martyrdom or his importance as a figure in early Christianity, but he does present historical evidence to question severely the idea of Petrine supremacy and Roman claims to such supremacy. "The theory that it is and must be associated with the Roman succession is a relatively late extraneous addition." (p. 63)

This little book revitalizes the figure of Peter in its historical setting and subjects the existing historical evidence to careful re-examination. Though this work will by no means be acceptable to all concerned in all its aspects, nevertheless it is well worth reading for a good general survey of St. Peter and the difficulties that this great figure provides for those who would interpret him and his work.

JOHN E. REXINE

The Ordinal. London: Oxford University Press, 1958, Pp. 19. \$0.25.

This pamphlet, which is published for the Church of South India by the Oxford University Press, contains the Ordination Rites of Deacons, Presbyters and Bishops as prescribed by the Church of South India. According to the tenets of this church, "the ministry is a gift of God through Christ to His Church, which He has given for the perfecting of the life and service of all its members."

The Ordination Rites for the three orders of the Priesthood are divided into three parts. In the first, the candidate is presented to the Bishop, whereupon the letter authorizing the candidate's ordination is read to the congregation. Once the Nicene Creed has been recited, the candidate is submitted to a rather thorough examination conducted by the Bishop. In the second, the Bishop prays for the spiritual well-being of the candidate. In the third, the laying of the hands takes place. In the case of a Bishop, at least three Bishops do this; in the case of a Presbyter, the Bishop and the Presbyters; and in the case of a Deacon, only a Bishop.

RALPH MCGILL, *A Church, A School*. New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1959. Pp. 92. \$2.00.

Pulitzer Prize Winner Ralph McGill, editor of the *Atlantic Constitution* since 1938, has shown himself worthy of the best traditions of American journalism. A distinguished newspaperman from the Deep South, Ralph McGill clearly and courageously demonstrates that there are still Southerners of rational, clear-headed minds with a devotion to the laws of the United States of America.

Though this book is a collection of editorial columns by the author in the *Atlantic Constitution* concerned with the school integration question and racial and religious reactions in the South, there is ultimately a theme that runs through all the chapters, explicitly or implicitly, and that is that this country is still governed by laws and not by individual, hate-mongering men.

Ralph McGill believes in the observance of law and order and the due process of law. McGill says, "We must be a nation of law. We can criticize the courts; we can deplore their decisions; we can seek by legal and legislative means to have their decisions reversed or amended." (p. 80). But McGill is incontrovertibly against court defiance. We know what the law of the land is; we know that public education is a public necessity; we know that mob violence is no solution, nor is court defiance the proper solution; so argues editor McGill.

"For a long time now it has been needful for all Americans to stand up and be counted on the side of law and the due process of law—even when to do so goes against personal beliefs and emotions. It is late. But there is time yet." (p. 11) Thus does McGill offer a courageous challenge to his fellow Southerners to exhibit respect for the law and an enlightened understanding of a highly emotionally-charged problem.

An excellent little book, *A Church, A School*, should be in the hands of every American, Northerner as well Southerner, who is concerned with one of America's most troublesome problems, and whether we realize it or not, this is a religious and moral problem for all Americans, as well as being a political and sociological one.

JOHN E. REXINE

THOMAS CALDECOT CHUBB, *The Byzantines*. Illustrated by Richard M. Powers. Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1959. Pp. 127. \$2.95.

This small, pleasant book is not designed for the scholars, not even

for those who have an average knowledge of the Byzantines. It is rather a popularized, simplified general introduction to the Byzantine world, an introduction designed for young people. It is written with great understanding, love, and appreciation of its theme.

The work, composed as a story rather than as a history, begins *in medias res*, with the capture of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204 A.D. Mr. Chubb gives us first the stupendous impression made by Constantinople on the simple minds of its Latin conquerors. Then, he traces its splendid life back and forth through the ages, and shows some typical pictures of the Byzantine world: the office, power, and splendor of the Byzantine Emperors, the Byzantine army, Orthodox religious life, Byzantine finances, and the Byzantine way of life. The last chapter, "Last Days of the Empire," is a summarized narration of Byzantine history from the conquest of Constantinople by the Crusaders (1204) to its fall to the Turks (1453). A very helpful chronological chart of the Byzantine Empire and world events and a half-page note of books for further reading complete this small book, which is also beautifully illustrated with drawings by Mr. Richard M. Powers.

Though Mr. Chubb's narration is not altogether free of some errors and misinterpretations, yet, generally, it is an objective, honest, historically correct, appreciative and enlightened story. His major theme — Constantinople and its people and their fascinating cultural and practical achievements — is vividly and pleasantly presented. This small book is worth reading not only by young people but also by adults who do not happen to know anything of Byzantium.

COSTAS M. PROUSSIS

J. B. BURY, *History of the Later Roman Empire, from the Death of Theodosius I. to the Death of Justinian*. New York: Dover Publications, 1958. Vols. I-II, pp. xxv and 471, ix and 494. \$4.00 the set.

The republication in paper-bound edition of this well-known historical work of J. B. Bury is a welcome addition to the recent Byzantine bibliography for two main reasons: First, J. B. Bury, a diversified scholar and historian, was, for his time, a pioneer in the field of Byzantine history; and it is always inspiring to see how a pioneer worked in searching into and trying to make known a period of history which was then generally neglected. And second, Bury's objective observations

York: A Galaxy Book, Oxford University Press, 1957. Paperbound. Pp. ix and 523. \$2.95.

This well-known book of the late Professor Cochrane, reprinted now in a paper-bound edition, still retains much of its vigor and value twenty years after its original publication. The author is primarily interested in basic aspects of the state and the individual, their interrelations and interactions, especially as they are manifested in the causality and consequence of the historical events of the first four centuries of our era. The problems of causes and ends, the ways and methods used by the individual and the state in solving their problems, in searching and attaining their purposes, their successes and failures, their intended aims and their accomplished feats, constitute the main object of research and discussion by the author.

The book is divided into three parts, "Reconstruction," "Renovation," and "Regeneration," subdivided into twelve chapters. The first part is concerned with the attempts at reconstruction of the Roman Empire under the Roman Emperors from Augustus to Diocletian; the second, with the renovation of the Empire from Constantine to Theodosius under the influence of Christianity; and the third, with the regeneration of the Empire and its transformation into a Christian world. In all three parts the valiant but ineffective struggle of the classical world to survive *in toto* is delineated and appraised through its manifestations and results, especially as some aspects of classical culture were blended with and integrated into the new world. In fact, this work is not a history of the influence of classical culture upon Christianity; it is rather an interpretation of the impact of the classical culture upon the world during the first four centuries A.D., and vice versa, an interpretation of the impact of Christianity upon the Graeco-Roman world of that period. However, the gradual fusion of classical culture into the new world, and the gradual — sometimes violent rather than gradual — transition from the classical view of life to the Christian, are vividly depicted and ingeniously interpreted. Of course, the leading political and intellectual personalities of each period are the main carriers and exponents of the prevailing currents of thought and action; and in interpreting and appraising their work the author deals with them extensively — often without much reverence, but always with real interest and deep insight. It is in such instances that he gives vent to his somewhat Tacitean irony and bitterness, and his lively style is then at its best.

Christianity and Classical Culture is an important contribution to

T. B. L. WEBSTER, *From Mycenae to Homer*. London: Methuen, 1958. Pp. xvi and 312, 24 plates and a map. \$6.75.

This is a fascinating book, in which Professor Webster tries to study, in an imaginative context, the early Greek literature and art of the pre-Homeric times in connection with the archaeological and other discoveries and lore of the Mycenaean and other, Oriental, peoples. The particular study of that period from that point of view is a new and rather fashionable field in Greek scholarship, especially since the recent reading by Michael Ventris and others of the so-called Linear B tablets. Based on these documents and the evidence provided by archaeology and other related fields of Mycenaean and Near Eastern studies, Professor Webster attempts the task of reconstructing the world of Mycenaean period, especially as it concerned literature and art. In a detailed, thorough, and erudite examination and juxtaposition of the known or supposedly known similarities and differences of life and culture in the Mycenaean and Oriental worlds, he arrives, though not through factual evidence always but often through assumptions and leaps of imagination, at some revealing but prospective and bold conclusions in regard to the general appearance of life and culture during the Mycenaean and later periods, and in regard to the extent and value of the non-Greek contributions particularly to Mycenaean culture. One may hardly profess that the meager and fragmentary evidence now available can justify such sweeping conclusions, even though the general trend of reasoning points to such a possibility. But between possibility and facts there is still a great distance to be covered. Nevertheless, this erudite work, written for specialists and initiated scholars, is very stimulating, especially for its pioneering character of comparative study and for its bold and far-reaching conclusions. It is almost a test in prophesying, for only the future can decide the ultimate truth and reliability of this work.

COSTAS M. PROUSSIS

RICHMOND LATTIMORE, *The Poetry of Greek Tragedy*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1958. Pp. 157. \$3.50.

This book contains six lectures given by Professor Richmond Lattimore at The Johns Hopkins University in January, 1957, and printed here without substantial alteration, with some notes and a brief bibliography. Professor Lattimore, the distinguished translator of ancient Greek tragedies and other Greek poems, offers us here, in a nutshell,

what he deems the essence of Greek tragedy: its poetry. For, frequently, overwhelmed by the many and profound problems so skillfully treated in it, one forgets that Greek tragedy was also poetry of the highest standard and value, in form and substance, in creative imagination, in style, and language. But the reading of this book is a refreshing experience; for, it helps one realize that poetry is a primary and inalienable feature of ancient Greek tragedy and "contributes to the effect of drama as drama," as Professor Lattimore rightly points out. "Metrical and rhetorical structure, imagery, the use of words and forms not used in prose" — which are technically basic elements of poetry — are also indispensable ingredients of Greek tragedy, and their skillful use enhances the imaginative, emotional, and idealistic impact of tragedy, deepens its character and meaning, and revitalizes its contents. This is clearly proved by the sensitive aesthetic analysis of four tragedies of Aeschylus, two of Sophocles, and three of Euripides, many illustrative passages of which are given in new beautiful translations by Professor Lattimore.

There are frequent misprints of many Greek words in the book, and a misstatement on p. 104: "He [*i.e.*, Euripides] won only four firsts in tragic competition, and one of these was posthumous." We know, however, from Suidas and other sources that Euripides won *five*, not four, first dramatic victories, one of which was posthumous.

COSTAS M. PROUSSIS

PAUL FRIEDLÄNDER, *Plato*. 1. *An Introduction*. Translated from the German by Hans Meyerhoff. Bollingen Series LIX. New York: Pantheon Books, 1958. Pp. xxiii and 423. \$5.00.

This is the first of three volumes of the brilliant work on Plato by the distinguished German scholar, Professor Friedländer. "Two volumes devoted to the interpretation of the single Dialogues will complete this work" in its English form, the author states in his brief Preface.

This is a fundamental work for students of Plato. Since its first German publication (in 1928-1930, and, revised and enlarged, in 1954) it has been rightly hailed as a major accomplishment in the Platonic studies. It is sound and lucid in its interpretation, consistent in its general synthesis (especially Part I) and particular argumentation,

Theology at Boston University as partial fulfillment for the Th.D. degree in Church History. The material of Professor Istavridis' dissertation terminated with Origen, whereas this study investigates the history of that famous school from the passing of Origen to its closing during the fifth century. The first period of the school is correctly characterized as the beginning and development. This was no doubt the golden era of the school. The second period under discussion is that of decline and disintegration. In spite of this, many capable teachers adorned the school and proved to be rivals of Origen in wisdom.

Professor Istavridis follows exactly the same plan in this work that he pursued in his dissertation. In the first place, he examines the environment in which the school functioned and developed: heathenism, education, philosophy, and the various religions. Secondly, he surveys the history of the Christian Church during this period and the controversies, schisms, and heresies. Then he presents the history of the school, with the life, writings, and teachings in general lines of its teachers: Heraclas, Dionysios, Theognostos, Pierios, Achillas, Serapion, Peter of Alexandria, Makarios the Politician, Didymus the Blind, and Rodon, the last teacher, according to Philip Sidite.

Thus ended two centuries of the history of a school that had offered so much to the Christian Church and to theological science, some of whose characteristics are accepted today by the Orthodox Church.

Dr. Istavridis' study is a scholarly presentation. It is well documented with original and secondary sources. It is hoped that Dr. Istavridis will soon translate this study into English so that it will enrich the ever increasing library of books on the School of Alexandria.

THE REV. GEORGE J. TSOMAS

METROPOLITAN OF KYTHERA MELETIOS, *Σύστημα Ἱερῶς Ἐξομολογητικῆς* (*System of Holy Confession*). Athens: Pege Orthodoxou Bibliou, 1960. Pp. 572.

ARCHIMANDRITE MAXIMOS DASKALAKIS, *Ἐγχειρίδιον Ἐξομολογητικῆς* (*Handbook of Confession*). Athens: Palamari-Kondrogianni & Sia, 1959. Pp. 211.

These are two vitally needed books in the art of Confession and are especially useful for Orthodox Confessors in this country. Both have been written by scholarly clergymen who have had the oppor-

tunity to teach the course in Holy Confession for many years to their students at the famous Patmos Seminary in Greece. The authors separately expound and develop the theory and practice of Penance or Holy Confession with such clearness and gracefulness within the framework of Greek Orthodox reality without disregarding at the same time the psychological and social meaning of this sacrament. After a short introduction the following subjects are presented albeit differently in each book: (1) The Sacraments of the Holy Orthodox Church; (2) the conditions or stages of Confession; (3) the meaning of sin; (4) the history of the Sacrament of Penance or Confession; (5) the Confessor's personality; (6) the Decalogue and the New Testament Law; (7) the Confessors before all ages of Christians; (8) the individual cases of Christians needing special attention by the Confessor.

I readily recommend both these books to all clergy and laymen. The Confessor needs to read them carefully again and again in order to absorb them and succeed in attaining the art of Confession. The Priest by reading them will prepare himself for the day he is to become a Confessor. The Christian needs them for edification, as do the student of theology and Sunday School teacher. These two worthy books deserve a wide circle of readers.

THE REV. GEORGE J. TSOUHAS

A. F. CARRILLO DE ALBORNOZ, *Roman Catholicism and Religious Liberty*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1955. Pp. 95.

The notion exists today that the Roman Catholic attitude towards religious liberty is this: (a) Concerning *policy*, when Roman Catholics are in the majority, they oppose it or reject it; when in the minority they ask for it. (b) Concerning *doctrine*, they make the distinction between "thesis" and "hypothesis." In the former, when Roman principles can be applied, "error" must not be free to propagate or be propagated. Only in the latter, when owing to adverse conditions the Roman Catholic principles cannot be imposed, "error" is tolerated as *the lesser evil*.

But this so-called authentic Roman Catholic position of "thesis" and "hypothesis" is not held by all Roman Catholic theologians. The author attempts to show that another wholly different theory exists concerning religious liberty: of universal religious liberty. Those who are proponents of it belong to countries having a Roman Catholic majority or at least where Protestants are in minority, as in France, Belgium, Austria, Portugal, West Germany and even Spain and Italy.

Dr. Albornoz brings forth the Biblical, theological, and philosophical arguments of these supporters of universal religious liberty within the Roman Catholic Church and the nature, sphere and limitations of religious freedom.

The new theory has not been checked or condemned officially by the Roman Catholic Church. "Probably," deducts the author, "because the present controversy among Roman Catholic theologians is not sufficiently ripe for making a final decision."

Finally, the author makes a comparison of Roman Catholic and Ecumenical statements on religious liberty and finds "the doctrinal accord . . . highly satisfactory." His conclusion: when the new theory becomes the official attitude of the Church, then a practical agreement with the Roman Catholic Church on the real exercise of religious liberty in all countries will be possible. The author, who is a former Roman Catholic theologian and knows the subject he is writing about (this is attested by his extensive Roman Catholic bibliography and notes), sincerely hopes that the time is not as far away, as many believe, for such an agreement. To all who are students of religious liberty and especially to those who are a religious minority in Roman Catholic countries, this study is highly recommended.

THE REV. GEORGE J. TSOMAS

ANDREAS S. IOANNOU, *Byzantine Frescoes of Euboea*. Vol. I: Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries. Athens: Ed. "Zygos," 1959. Pp. xx, 100 illustrations, and one map.

This beautiful edition consists mainly of the 100 illustrations of wall-paintings from ten churches in the central part of the island of Euboea. The accompanying text, written in both Greek and English, is very brief, consisting of an Introductory Note at the beginning of the book and of a List (and brief description) of the Churches at the end. The frescoes presented in this volume are good specimens of Byzantine religious art during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in Euboea. Mr. Ioannou plans to present frescoes from the Euboean churches of the post-Byzantine period in a second volume.

One would have preferred that the book had much more text so that one might learn something more about the history of the churches and their frescoes, their art, and their similarities with or differences from other wall-paintings. But this task calls for a specialist; and

Mr. Ioannou readily confesses that he is not a specialist. This book is only the product of his great love for Euboea and its Byzantine art. Nevertheless, the result of this love has proved a worthwhile achievement: It has resulted in a beautiful collection of representative specimens of Byzantine frescoes from Euboea, an important contribution to the study of Byzantine art in Greece.

The frescoes appearing in this volume are conventional and traditional in theme, artistic manner and execution, not differing much from the known Byzantine style. However, many of them display strong personal qualities of the unknown individual artists who painted the pictures. This is especially true with respect to some "portraits" which, through their artistic form and disposition, speak eloquently of the feelings and spirituality of the persons portrayed, and present them as vivid individual characters: Without losing anything of their transcendental spiritual function or their typified conventional form, these persons are also shown as living individuals with human properties. This proves that, while the unknown artists retained the tradition and conventionality of Byzantine art, yet sometimes they could not help but exhibit their strong personal artistic conceptions and taste, and even intrude with their names. In fact, the painter of the frescoes of one church (that of Transfiguration in Pyrgi) made himself known through his initials (X. I. B.) appearing in the founder's inscription.

But, what primarily transpires through this book is the saintly spirit of the Orthodox Christian world, a spirit ascending and uplifting, powerful though ascetic, relieving and strengthening. The art, though a very important factor, is only a supporting element to the all-consuming inner fire of the believing Christian souls who painted those frescoes and of the people for whom they were painted.

COSTAS M. PROUSSIS

For Better Teaching: Teacher Training Manual for Orthodox Church Schools (Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Education, Vol. III, No. 2, Summer 1959). Nyack, New York: Orthodox Christian Education Commission. Pp. 132.

This teacher's manual has been long in the making and its appearance is a highly welcome event. Now Sunday School Teachers and Church School Teachers can use a manual published in English which has been made possible through the joint efforts and cooperation of

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THE THEOLOGY OF EPICURUS COMPARED TO THAT OF LUCRETIUS

By JOHN E. REXINE

I

EPICURUS THE PHILOSOPHER

In the *Life of Epicurus*, which is in fact the tenth book of Diogenes Laertius' *History of the Philosophers*, there is extant a body of confused, disjointed, and disconnected but valuable factual material. This work contains a large number of quotations from Epicurus' writings which are quite similar in their language to that employed in the *Letters*. However informative and interesting this *Vita Epicuri* might be in general, specifically with regard to theology and religion, it reveals something of Epicurus which I think distinguishes him from Lucretius, and that is a difference of attitude toward religion. In the *Life of Epicurus*,¹ Lucretius' *deus* is spoken of with great deference. He is described as being a very benevolent person — to parents, brothers, servants. "In short there is his *benevolence* to all." (καθόλου τε ἡ πρὸς πάντας αὐτοῦ φιλανθρωπία). That is one of his two most apparent characteristics; his other is his profound reverence (ὁσιότης). "Of his reverence toward the gods and his love of his country it would be impossible to speak adequately." (τῆς μὲν πρὸς θεοὺς ὁσιότητος καὶ πρὸς πατρίδα φιλίας ἄλεκτος ἢ διάθεσις). This then is quite a different view from what one would get by reading the charges hurled by Cicero and Plutarch against the Epicureans — that they were actually atheists. This charge was sanctioned by tradition throughout the Middle Ages.² The charge, however, that Epicurus was an atheist ("one who does not believe in the existence of the gods") is just so much nonsense, however untoward popular opinion of Epicureanism may be. However, I don't think that Lucretius was as mild about the traditional theology and religion as one might mistakenly believe from reading the works of Cyril Bailey. Bailey has a tendency, every now and then, to apologize for Lucretius and Epicurus when it comes to their views on theological

¹ Cyril Bailey, *Epicurus* (Oxford, 1926), p. 147 (*Life of Epicurus*, 10). The translations used are those of Cyril Bailey.

² Cyril Bailey, *The Greek Atomists and Epicurus* (Oxford, 1928), p. 438.

matters by saying that they substituted something finer. In speaking of the Epicurean view of religion, Bailey says: "It is a fine and really living conception and it is certainly very far removed from the abnegation of religion."³ This is surely true of Epicurus' attitude toward religion, which is a pious one. It seems to carry through his works. Epicurus does not "attack" religion. Lucretius cries violently against it.

Two factors are fundamental in both Epicurus and Lucretius: (1) the gods; (2) the fear of death. Both these factors are somewhat intimately connected. In the *Letter to Herodotus* (81), Epicurus says that the "... principal disturbance (τάραχος ὁ κυριώτατος) in the minds of men arises because they think that these celestial bodies are blessed and immortal" and also "because they are always expecting or imagining some everlasting misery, such as is depicted in legends, or even the loss of feeling in death, as though it would concern them themselves."⁴ It is the agents of these "divine creatures" who seek to terrify people with stories of Acheron and its punishments.⁵ Epicurus, as well as Lucretius, is therefore putting forth an explanation of natural science to relieve man of these two fundamental fears. Basic to both, but clearly put forth in Epicurus, is the principle of peace of mind (ἀταραξία).⁶ The only reason for studying natural science is to gain knowledge of the phenomena of the heavens and thus bring to man "peace of mind." In *Fragment V, Ethica*, 80, we have this succinct statement about "peace of mind": "The greatest fruit of justice is serenity (Δικαιοσύνης καρπὸς μέγιστος ἀταραξία)." Thus we have the justification for modifying the traditional theology and the gods who wrought nothing but fear. But Epicurus, at least, remains pious and not violent. I repeat what seems to me the fundamental difference in *attitude* between Epicurus and Lucretius: Epicurus is respectful and pious; Lucretius violently anti-theological. Very interesting with regards to Epicurus is the following fragment:⁷

"57. Let us at least sacrifice *piously* and *rightly* where it is customary and let us do all things rightly according to the laws, not troubling ourselves with the common beliefs in what concerns the noblest and holiest of beings. Further let us be free of any charge

³ Bailey, *The Greek Atomists and Epicurus*, p. 481.

⁴ Bailey, *Epicurus*, p. 53.

⁵ Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* I, 102-109

⁶ Cf. *Letter to Pythocles*, 85.

⁷ *Fragment D Physics* 57 (Bailey p. 135).

in regard to their opinion. For thus can one live in conformity with nature.

"58. If God listened to the prayers of men, all men would quickly have perished; for they are forever praying for evil against one another."

I have emphasized Epicurus' piety and yet everybody knows that he attacked the traditional religion and theology on the ground that the gods have no part in the government of the world. To illustrate his views on the gods, I quote at length first from the *Letter to Menoeceus*, (III), 123.124:

"123.124. First of all believe that god is a being immortal and blessed, even as the common idea of a god is engraved on men's minds and do not assign to him anything alien to his immortality or ill-suited to his blessedness; but believe about him everything that can uphold his blessedness and immortality. *For gods there are, since knowledge of them is by clear vision.* (ἐναργῆς γὰρ αὐτῶν ἔστιν ἡ γνῶσις). But they are not such as the many believe them to be; for indeed they do not consistently represent them as they believe them to be. And the impious man is not he who denies the gods of the many, but he who attaches to the gods the beliefs of the many. For the statements of the many about the gods are not conceptions derived from sensation but false suppositions, according to which the greatest misfortunes befall the wicked and the greatest blessings (the good) by the gift of the gods. For men being accustomed always to their own virtues welcome those like themselves, but regard all that is not of their nature as alien."⁸

Notice how careful Epicurus is not to be charged with impiety. The ἀταραξία of the gods is what each man should piously seek. Thus "the contemplation with placid mind of the perfect peace of the gods becomes in this way a 'blessing' to the worshipper, for it enables him to assimilate himself more closely to them and to allow the images which tell him of their form to bring with them into his mind something of the tranquillity which they represent."⁹

To proceed further, of what nature are these Epicurean gods if they do not take any part in the governing of the world and human affairs? No. IV of the Κύριαι Δόξαι tells us:

⁸ Bailey, *Epicurus*, p. 84-88, (III Epicurus to Menoeceus).

⁹ Bailey, *Greek Atomists and Epicurus*, p. 480.

"The blessed and immortal nature knows no trouble to any other, so that it is never constrained by anger or favour. For all such things exist only in the weak." The only other information on the gods that we have from Epicurus himself are the following excerpts from the *Letter to Herodotus*¹⁰ and the *Letter to Menoeceus*:¹¹

(To Herodotus) 77. "Furthermore, the motions of the heavenly bodies and their turnings and eclipses and risings and settings and kindred phenomena to these, must not be thought to be due to any being who controls and ordains or has ordained them and at the same time enjoys perfect bliss together with immortality (for trouble and care and anger and kindness are not consistent with a life of blessedness, but these things come to pass where there is weakness and fear and dependence on neighbours). Nor again must we believe that they, which are but fire agglomerated in a mass, possess blessedness and voluntarily take upon themselves these movements. But we must preserve their full majestic significance in all expressions which we apply to such conceptions in order that there may not arise out of them opinions contrary to this notion of majesty."

(To Menoeceus) 133. "For indeed who, think you, is a better man than he who holds reverent opinions concerning the gods, and is at all times free from fear of death, and has reasoned out the end ordained by nature?"

134. "For indeed, it were better to follow the myths about the gods than become a slave to the destiny of the natural philosophers: for the former suggests a hope of placating the gods by worship, whereas the latter involves a necessity which knows no placation. As to chance, he regards it as a god as most men do (for a god's acts there is no disorder) . . ."

From here on our normal sources fail and secondary sources have to be used. On the authority of Cicero in the *De Natura Deorum*, the Epicureans argued that the gods exist because of the universal belief in them, "which has been implanted by nature in the minds of all men." This, I take it, is the famous Lucretian *notities* or pre-conception which is recalled in Book V of the *De Rerum Natura*, lines 1161-8. Epicurus gives the real reason: "Gods there are, since the knowledge of them is by clear vision." From this point on it is Lucretius who clarifies the nature of the gods and their function.

¹⁰ Bailey, *Epicurus*, p. 49.

¹¹ Bailey, *Epicurus*, p. 91.



II

LUCRETIVS THE ANTI-THEOLOGIAN

I have emphasized the difference in theological attitudes in Epicurus and Lucretius. I feel that such an evident distinction actually exists. The references to the gods and religion are scattered throughout the *De Rerum Natura*.¹² In the very first book, Lucretius is anxious to hurl a biting attack against religion. The Iphigenia at Aulis passage is significant in its position and its bitterness. How biting indeed is the last line of this passage, after the description of the human sacrifice of Iphigenia:

"Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum."

Even before this (11. 44-49), we get a hint of the nature of the gods in which Lucretius says: "For it must needs be that all the nature of the gods enjoys life everlasting in perfect peace, sundered and separated far away from our world. For free from all grief, free from danger, mighty in its own resources, never lacking aught of us, it is not won by virtuous service nor touched by wrath."¹³ The rest of Book I is silent on theology.

In Book II (11. 167-183) Lucretius warns Memmius against believing a certain sect that holds that natural phenomena are due to the gods. In lines 646-651 of the same book we find a repetition of the nature of the gods given first in lines 44-49 of Book I. And finally in Book II, lines 1090-1104, we are told that nature does all things without the help of the gods. The placid life of the gods is again related and emphasized and the question is sarcastically asked: "Who can avail to rule the whole sum of the boundless, who to hold in his guiding hand the mighty reins of the deep, who to turn round all the firmaments at once, and warm the fruitful lands with heavenly fires, or to be at all times present in all places, so as to make darkness with clouds, and shake the calm tracts of heaven with thunder, and then shoot thunderbolts, and often make havoc of his own temples, or moving away into deserts rage furiously there, plying the bolt, which often passes by the guilty and does death to the innocent and undeserving?"

In Book III, we have one delightful six-line passage on the gods (11. 18-24): "The majesty of the gods is revealed, and their peaceful

¹² References to gods: Book I 44-49, Book II 167-188, 646-651, 1090-1104, Book III 18-24, Book V 82-90, 146-155, 1161-1192, Book VI 68-78, 379-422.

¹³ Compare *Principal Doctrines I*.

abodes, which neither the winds shake nor clouds soak with showers, nor does the snow congealed with biting frost besmirk them with its white fall, but an ever cloudless sky vaults them over, and smiles with light bounteously spread abroad. Moreover, nature supplies all they need, nor does anything gnaw at their *peace of mind* at any time." Lucretius here paints a very lovely poetic picture but in the next few lines bursts out again claiming that there is no such place as Acheron.

Book IV is void of any references to the gods, and so it is not until Book V that we meet the gods again. Lines 82-90 of Book V remind us of the care-free life of the gods. In lines 146-155, we are told something about the composition of the gods. Of course they are atomic. They are unlike human beings both in their abodes and in their subtlety (*tenues de corpore eorum*) of their bodies. Apparently they, as well as their abodes are composed of very thin atoms. In line 155 Lucretius says: "*Quae tibi posterius largo sermone probabo.*" and never does.

In the same book, lines 1161-1192, we have perhaps the most complete statement about the gods to be found either in Epicurus or in Lucretius. These lines are so important and revealing that I shall quote them in full: "Next, what causes spread abroad the divine powers of the gods among great nations, and filled cities with altars, and taught men to undertake sacred rites at yearly festivals, rites which are honoured today in great empires and at great places; whence even now there is implanted in mortals a shuddering dread (*insitus horror*) which raises new shrines of the gods over all the world, and constrains men to throng to them on holy days; of all this it is not hard to give account in words. For indeed already the race of mortals *used to perceive* the glorious shapes of the gods with waking mind, and all the more in sleep with wondrous bulk of body. To these then they would assign sense because they were seen to move their limbs, and to utter haughty sounds befitting their noble mien and ample strength. And they gave them *everlasting life because their images came in constant stream and the form remained unchanged*, and indeed above all because they thought that those endowed by such strength could not readily be vanquished by force. They thought they far excelled in happiness because the fear of death never harassed any of them, and at the same time because in sleep they saw them accomplish many marvels, yet themselves not undergo any toil therefrom. Moreover, they beheld the workings of the sky in due order, and the diverse seasons of the year come round, nor could they learn by what causes that was brought about. And so they made it their refuge to lay all to the charge of the gods, and to suppose that all was guided by their will.

And they placed the abodes and quarters of the gods in the sky, because through the sky night and the moon are seen to roll on their way, moon, day, and night, and the stern signs of night, and the torches of heaven that rove through the night, and the flying flames, clouds, sunlight, rain, snow, winds, lightning, hail, and the rapid roar and mighty murmurings of heaven's threats."

In Book VI, lines 68-78, we are again warned not to pollute our minds with thoughts unworthy of the gods. In lines 379-422, we have a long passage on Jupiter and the gods and the thunderbolt, which is in effect quite ironic: "Why rather is one conscious of no foul guilt wrapt and enangled, all innocent in the flames . . . ? Why again do they aim at the waste places . . . ? Why does he [Jupiter] smite asunder the sacred shrines of the gods and his own glorious dwelling-places with hostile bolt? Why does he destroy the fair-fashioned idols of the gods and take away their beauty from his images with his furious wound?"

This, therefore, completes what Lucretius has to say about the gods. Lucretius, to be sure, believes in the existence of the gods. This is manifest from the sources quoted above. There are two reasons given for believing in the existence of the gods: one is false; the other is true. The false reason is given under the heading of "celestial phenomena." That is to say, that when human beings look upon the orderly course and pattern of heavenly bodies, they suppose wrongly that this can be brought about only by divine providence. They look upon celestial phenomena such as lightning, storm, and thunder, and attribute these also to divine ordinance. However, the true reason for belief in the actual existence of the immortals comes through the visions of the gods with which we are blessed. These visions that we have of the gods are described in lines 1161-1192 of Book V (quoted above). These visions attest to the wondrous size, beauty, movement, continuity, immortality, and sensation of the gods. These visions are in fact caused by the *simulacra* which are so *tenues* that they cannot be comprehended by the senses but are held to be known by a nebulous thing known as an "act of attention on the part of the mind" (ἐπιβολὴ τῆς διανοίας). The best plausible explanation of this whole business seems to be that the gods have an identity of form (see quote on page 8) and not an identity of body. Just as a waterfall keeps shedding its watery "film" but retains its form, so the gods keep sending off *simulacra*, but these are constantly being replaced. These blessed creatures dwell in the interspaces (intermundia) of the universe in a perfectly deathless tranquillity.

Lucretius' violent attitude can be seen quite readily in his theological views. It is religion which comes down from heaven and oppresses human life and commits impious deeds (the sacrifice of Iphigenia). Religion propagates stories about Acheron and its dire punishments after death. The gods could not possibly have made the world, for it's made so badly.¹⁴ The tenets and beliefs of religion must be strongly and if needs be violently opposed and banished by the stronger power of scientific inquiry; the gods are not responsible for celestial activity and phenomena. The gods are not responsible for the governing of the world nor are they interested in human affairs.

Thus, we have Lucretius and Epicurus striving for the same end but with different tones. Epicurus does not impress one as violent. He is calm. He perhaps tried to taste the ἀταραξία with which he was so much striving to influence people. Lucretius knows that the "true piety is to be able to regard all things with a tranquil mind,"¹⁵ and that calm tranquillity is an ideal which is expressed in the gods who are themselves a realization of this moral ideal. The imitation of their life of ἀταραξία is a form of worship. But Lucretius bursts out, every now and then, and at the oddest places, against the common views of the gods and the universe, which instead of producing "peace of mind," produce disturbance of mind.

Epicurus and Lucretius both tried to bring man peace of mind through their untraditional approach.

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¹⁴ Lucretius V, 1203.

¹⁵ Lucretius II, 167-181, V 156-234.

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